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Argentina not upset at U.S. intelligence aid to Britain

By Alfonso Chardy
Inquirer Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The Argentine government is aware of intelligence aid that the United States has given to Great Britain and believes this aid will not hamper peace efforts by Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr., according to Argentina's ambassador to the United States.

Ambassador Esteban Takacs said in an interview that "we do not feel upset" about reports that the British have been receiving U.S. intelligence information since the Falkland Islands crisis between Britain and Argentina erupted two weeks ago.

He said that U.S. officials who are worried about possible damage to Haig's mission made it clear to Argentina that Britain and the United States have exchanged intelligence data as part of the World War II accords that helped establish the U.S. intelligence community.

But Takacs accused British diplomats and American liberals of deliberately trying to undermine efforts by the Reagan administration to improve U.S. relations with the military government in Buenos Aires.

Their campaign, he said, is designed to force the United States to side with Britain in the Falklands crisis and to block further attempts by the Reagan administration to establish a "strategic" friendship with Buenos Aires.

In a separate interview Wednesday night, Sir Nicholas Henderson, the British ambassador to the United States, rejoiced in the frustrations of his Argentine colleague.

"What an extraordinary idea, this of the Argentine ambassador," Henderson said. "Does he think we should try to improve his country's relations with the United States? Does he think we are here to help the very country that has attacked us? Preposterous."

Henderson, however, essentially denied that he, his government or his diplomatic staff were trying to undermine any government diplomatically.

And both Henderson and Takacs said that they had instructions from their respective capitals to continue their trust in the role being played by the United States.

Takacs said reports that the Soviet Union was tilting toward Buenos Aires and the United States toward London "were published, and encouraged, to damage the Argentine cause and ... our new-found good and warm relations, especially the efforts by the government of Mr. Ronald Reagan to improve relations with my government."

He put reports of U.S. aid to the British in the same context. "They were designed to embarrass Mr. Reagan so that we in Argentina [would lose] confidence in the efforts of Mr. Haig," he said.

Haig has been shuttling between Buenos Aires, London and Washington in efforts to avert a military confrontation between Argentina and Britain over the Falklands.

Argentina and Takacs said Reagan's remarks Wednesday indicating that he believed reports of Soviet aid to Argentina may have been the result of poor briefing. "I have the impression that President Reagan may have not really been briefed well, or maybe he just read the press reports and was quickly reacting to them.

"I want to categorically declare, right now, that all those reports that say that Argentina is receiving aid from the Soviet Union in terms of intelligence are absolutely false."

An aide sitting next to Takacs said that in fact his government believed that Soviet surveillance aircraft or warships were shadowing the British fleet steaming toward the Falklands and were indeed gathering intelligence, but only as a matter of course.

The aide acknowledged that Argentina is important to Moscow because of its grain sales to the Soviets and its purchases of Soviet nuclear fuel.

But he pointed to the recent United Nations resolution urging Argentina to withdraw its troops from the Falklands, which Britian had ruled for 149 years until the Argentines seized control April 2. "We expected Russia to veto that and it didn't," the aide said. "We think Russia is interested in this crisis to muddy the waters, not to help matters."

In fact, Takacs said that if the crisis is resolved peacefully, especially through Haig's mission, Argentina will be prepared to work more closely with Washington. He declined to give details, but diplomatic sources here have said recently that Argentine military advisers were helping anti-communist guerrillas in Central America to undermine the leftist revolutionary government of Nicaragua.

Later the Argentine Embassy noted the issuance of a letter by five congressmen saying that if Haig's diplomatic effort fails, Washington should side with Britain. The letter was signed by Reps. Jonathan B. Bingham, Benjamin S. Rosenthal and Stephen J. Solarz, all New York Democrats; Millicent Fenwick (R., N.J.) and Michael D. Barnes (D., Md.).

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